A Forester's Communications Handbook

Society of American Foresters
Growing better all the time

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THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS (SAF) IS THE NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING THE FORESTRY PROFESSION IN THE UNITED STATES. FOUNDED IN 1900 BY GIFFORD PINCHOT, IT IS THE LARGEST PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY FOR FORESTERS IN THE WORLD. THE MISSION OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS IS TO ADVANCE THE SCIENCE, EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND PRACTICE OF FORESTRY; TO ENHANCE THE COMPETENCY OF ITS MEMBERS; TO ESTABLISH PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE; AND, TO USE THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND CONSERVATION ETHIC OF THE PROFESSION TO ENSURE THE CONTINUED HEALTH AND USE OF FOREST ECOSYSTEMS AND THE PRESENT AND FUTURE AVAILABILITY OF FOREST RESOURCES TO BENEFIT SOCIETY. SAF IS A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS OF 501 (C) (3). SAF MEMBERS INCLUDE NATURAL RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SETTINGS, RESEARCHERS, CEOS, ADMINISTRATORS, EDUCATORS, AND STUDENTS.

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Introduction

Through good communication, foresters can send the message that forest management is needed and that professional foresters can satisfy the environmental, social, and economic demands placed on our forests. This handbook will help you feel more comfortable communicating and become a more effective participant in forestry communications efforts. Remember that you are the human face of the profession. You may be able to reach contacts that no one else can.

This handbook is designed to help foresters from all fields within the profession communicate to a range of audiences, from the individual citizen to the news media. Each chapter is a stand-alone guide for a particular kind of audience, so you can start by picking a chapter that fits your immediate needs, whether that's…

- preparing a presentation for a civic group;
- talking with individuals;
- speaking before a planning commission or other government agency; or
- being interviewed for a newspaper or radio program.

If you get stuck or have a question, remember that you have many colleagues in SAF who can help you. Help is always available: go to http://www.safnet.org or call the national office at (301) 897-8720.

Always remember that you are an ambassador for the Forestry profession wherever you go. No matter who you are communicating with, be sure that you are presenting factual information that can be defended with data. It is wise to check your facts for accuracy before you state them in public. Keep the SAF Code of Ethics in mind when you create your presentation.

How to use This Handbook

This handbook was created with busy people in mind. It is NOT a textbook. Do not feel that you need to read every word of it. The following is a suggestion of how to best utilize this handbook:

1. Consult the Table of Contents to locate the type of presentation you will be doing.
2. Browse through the bolded items in that section to give yourself a rundown of the major points for that type of presentation.
3. For any bolded items that you feel need additional information or explanation, continue to read the rest of the text provided. This will fully explain the bolded item and will get you quickly on your way to a great presentation.

CHAPTER 1: One-On-One Communication

Some of the most important communicating foresters do is interpersonal. Although it is not the most efficient method for reaching a lot of people, one-on-one communication can make a big impression on the person to whom you are speaking. For foresters working in small- to medium-sized towns, it is the primary means to make favorable impressions about your work and the forestry profession in general.

This chapter offers information on effective strategies to help you…

- identify opportunities for one-on-one communication; and
- realize your role in the conversation

Whom to Talk To

You may not think that you interact with very many people, but consider all the people you meet over the course of a month. The results may surprise you. Here are a few people you have probably encountered recently:

- postmaster or postmistress
- grocery store manager
- bank loan officer
- neighbors and friends
- spouse and extended family
- county supervisor
- city council member
- newspaper editor
- children's teachers and classmates' parents
- members of organizations to which you belong

The Hometown Effect

The degree to which you can get a conversation started about forestry sometimes depends on the size of the town and the level of local interest.

Smaller Towns: In small towns in forested regions, you are known as the local forester, a Forest Service employee, or the forester for a local company. In such circumstances, people generally will ask you about what is going on in the forest or about upcoming projects: "You guys going to do any burning this year?" These people usually are knowledgeable about forestry in general, if not the technical details.

Larger Towns/Cities: In bigger towns or areas not economically or physically close to the forest, it may be difficult to find people who want to talk about forestry -- but they are there and they are interested. Although they may not be as knowledgeable as people in closer contact with the forest, they nevertheless have opinions about it. You can announce your status as a forester by wearing a company, agency, or SAF jacket or cap. Once people have identified you as a forester, they are more likely to come to you with questions.

Your Role in the Conversation

People value the forest and are curious about what foresters do. For the most part, foresters are respected for their knowledge and commitment to managing forests for a variety of values. Through one-on-one communication, individual foresters can encourage support for our mission.

Here are some tips to help you talk to interested people:

- **Respect the person's right to their own perspective.** People are interested in trees and forests from a variety of perspectives or values, some of which may be at odds with your own. As a professional, you need to respect the other person's right to have his or her own perspective of the forest—spiritual, utilitarian, or something else. You may be able to show how foresters are making management decisions with multiple perspectives in mind.
- **Be a good listener.** Make sure you understand a person's perspective or question before answering or moving on with the conversation. Paraphrase and repeat his question or comment to be sure that you have it right.
- **Ask questions.** As you get to know the person, information she provides may give you better insight into personal perspectives and how to address them.
- **Be congenial rather than confrontational.** It's ok to tell someone you disagree, but follow it up with something like, "Let's see if we can agree on some basic information."
- **Focus on their questions or concerns.** This may be the only opportunity to affect how they perceive forestry. Don't let your mind wander.

- **Avoid jargon.** Foresters use a lot of specialized terminology that is unfamiliar to the general populace. Using jargon may turn the person off or may make them feel inferior. If you must use forestry jargon, be sure to define the term for the listener.
- **Don’t force your opinions on unwilling people.** Some people can be difficult to talk to and will not accept anything you tell them. The best thing to do in this situation is to remove yourself from the conversation and avoid escalating the conflict.

CHAPTER 2: Small-Group Communication

Small groups offer the opportunity for valuable interaction that is often impossible with larger groups. Your forestry presentation may be the only contact with forestry experts that the group members experience.

This chapter offers information on effective strategies to help you…

- speak at community meetings;
- identify your audience;
- tailor your message to different people and organizations; and
- present ideas effectively.

Speaking From the Audience

Community meetings calling for audience input on forestry and forestry-related issues come in many forms, from public forums, such as city council or chamber of commerce meetings, to social, special interest, or philanthropic meetings, such as Lions Club, Master Gardeners, or Medical Auxiliary. All such encounters can be effective venues to provide sound, science-based information to the public and improve the image of forestry in the public eye.

Participating in a Public Meeting

- **Be willing to speak up.** You are an expert in your field and can offer expert advice.
- **Use good manners.** Respect the speaker and the other attendees. Do not engage in sidebar conversations and do not repeat the same point over and over, denying others the opportunity to offer input.
- **Follow the protocol of the meeting.** Observe the rules set by the moderator for offering public comment. Formal meetings commonly follow parliamentary procedure, otherwise known as Roberts' Rules of Order. Being familiar with these rules of engagement can often provide a distinct advantage.
- **Make notes before you speak.** Notes help you focus and include everything you want to express. They have the added value of providing a prop if you are nervous speaking before an audience.

- **Identify yourself.** This gives credibility and context to what you will say. Some meetings require identification for recordkeeping. Whether to include your professional affiliation depends on your role. If you are in attendance as an individual, where you work may or may not be relevant. If you are representing your employer, state that you are there on behalf of Company X.
- **Speak clearly.** Speak precisely and at a volume that can be heard by all attendees. When speaking into a microphone, stay at least six inches away to avoid feedback noise.
- **Be concise.** Be brief, but include information that supports what you say. Offer to supply documentation and stay after the meeting to address any further questions.
- **Reinforce your comments.** Strengthen your input by doing followup. Approach officials and attendees after the meeting to thank them for their participation, shake hands, exchange business cards, and offer further discussion or help. This puts your face (and the memory of your comments) in front of them one more time.
- **Avoid jargon.** Foresters use a lot of specialized terminology that is unfamiliar to the general populace. Using jargon may turn people off or may make them feel inferior. If you must use forestry jargon, be sure to define the term for the listeners.

Speaking to the Audience

Making presentations to community organizations is a great way to present forestry information to the public. Good public contact is essential to the future of the profession.

Creating and Using Opportunities

- **Actively search for places to volunteer as a speaker.** The local chamber of commerce and local library usually maintain lists of community organizations that want volunteers to speak at meetings or arrange activities for members. Volunteering gives you the chance to choose your group, the format for the presentation, and often the topic for the program.
- **Accept invitations to speak in small-group situations.** As an invited speaker, you may have less latitude than when you volunteer, but the group will probably be willing to accommodate you. They may have a specific topic they would like you to address, such as managing forests for recreation and timber, or how to identify trees, but you can offer a list of possible topics. As you do more presentations, you will develop a series of programs to adjust for particular audiences.

- **Brainstorm topics.** If you are without an agreed-upon topic and are having difficulty limiting your choices, try brainstorming. Make a list of potential topics you feel comfortable addressing. From that list, narrow the topics down to two or three that would be most appropriate for your audience and purpose. For each topic, briefly outline the major points you would use for a presentation or program. Choose your topic from these outlines, and save the other outlines for future use.
- **Get the details right.** When scheduling a speaking engagement, address the items in the following checklist:
    - **Date and time:** note the duration of the meeting and the length of your presentation.
    - **Location:** confirm directions.
    - **Audience:** ask for information on the organization, audience demographics, and likely head count.
    - **Topic:** make sure that the meeting planner has agreed to the subject you plan to discuss.
    - **Purpose:** determine the reason for your presentation, whether it's for general information or to address specific issues facing the organization.
    - **Format:** find out what format—hands-on, lecture, PowerPoint—is expected.
    - **Facilities:** ask what technical equipment will be available. Be sure to ask about voice amplification, especially in outdoor situations.
    - **Contact information:** acquire phone numbers and email addresses of those in charge of arranging the program.
- **Contact the media.** As soon as you know the details of your public presentation, contact the appropriate media for the area. The earlier you appear on their schedule, the better the chance of coverage. Let the public know about your presentation. Prepare and send a press release to your local newspaper. If you are unsure how to proceed, contact the chair or a member of the SAF Communications Committee, or call the SAF national office.

Preparation

- **Know your audience!** Identifying the audience and their reason for inviting you should be your foremost concern when planning any piece of communication. Whom are you presenting to, why are you presenting, what is your message, and what do you hope to accomplish? This information will help you build a connection with the audience and convey meaningful information. Make that connection within the first two minutes of your talk.

  - **Request a mission statement** from the organization and ask about past presentations that the group considers to have been valuable. This will help you to focus your message.
  - **Find a connection with the audience.** Plan to start with a scenic photo, an amusing story, or something else that shows your knowledge of or interest in their cause or your familiarity with their region, county, or town. Stories are very powerful. Have several short stories that you can use that will support your key points.
  - **Find the appropriate knowledge level.** We have all heard speakers who assumed too much or too little knowledge and left us feeling that we wasted our time. Knowing and preparing for your audience will help hit it right.

- **Research your topic thoroughly.** As you go through your topic points, determine whether you need to do any additional research. If you suspect there may be new developments, this is the perfect opportunity to update your knowledge base. Document your sources so that you can cite, recommend, or relocate them quickly and easily.
- **Identify any possible controversies.** As you prepare for your talk, identify possible controversies that may come out and prepare responses ahead of time. This will help keep you from having to come up with answers on the spot.
- **Determine the format**. Choose the kind of presentation that will best suit the combination of audience, purpose, time, and place. Do you have the equipment and materials to support your presentation? Will the location be appropriate for your presentation style or activities? Your level of expertise, available equipment, and site will determine what kind of audiovisual equipment or other technology to use. Always have a backup delivery plan and be prepared to move to it quickly if Plan A fails. Surprises happen: plan for them.
- **Create a materials checklist.** Consider all the items you will need for your talk, from computer and laser pointer to pencils, tablets, and handouts. This list will depend on

what type of presentation you are giving. Plastic household storage containers make good “trunks” for equipment and supporting materials.

- **Prepare handouts.** Materials to support your presentation and deliver the take-home message should be appropriate for the audience profile. A handout reinforces your presentation, and many participants appreciate having a take-home “trophy.” Handouts available from the SAF national office include position statements, pamphlets and videos on becoming a forester, and bumper stickers. Simple handouts allow the audience to reflect on what you have said long after your talk is over. The handouts should include contact information so they can have further dialouge with you if they would like.
- **Keep any slides simple.** A good graphic accompanied by a succinct paragraph will stick with people. But PowerPoint slides with lots of small print invite the audience to read the text rather than listen to you. Complex graphics, illegible labels, and mysterious abbreviations also detract from your presentation.
- **Begin with the end in mind.** Make sure that each of your goals or benefits is proven in your presentation.
- **Make your most important point first.** Studies have shown that people remember the beginning and ending of a presentation and tend to have poor recollection of the middle. Make your first 1-3 points something that the audience can agree with, this will warm your audience up to you.
- **Prove your assertions with data.** An audience that sees and hears facts will have much greater retention than one that is given only abstractions. You want to show the audience that forestry is a science-based profession and give them hard evidence to consider when forming their own opinions.
- **Present your statements in a positive light.** Taking a positive perspective will help the audience connect you and your message with positive or neutral feelings instead of negative ones. For example, instead of labeling a slide “Forest Health Problems,” use “Challenges to Maintaining Forest Health.”
- **Avoid technical jargon.** You are talking to nonforesters. Technical lingo and references to specialized technology will disconnect you from your audience.
- **Focus on the benefits of an action.** Don’t just say what needs to be done, explain why that action is necessary and what the effect will be if it is taken.

- **Practice with a stopwatch.** Run through your presentation or program before taking it on the road. This will help you identify any rough spots in the presentation and ensure you can complete it in the allotted time. Be respectful of your audience's time and work within the limit you are given. Leave time to answer questions.
- **Don't be overanxious about your presentation.** You are the expert on the subject; that's why you were invited to speak to the group. You have something to offer and teach them.

Delivery

If you are well prepared, the actual delivery should be relatively painless. Here are a few pointers to make the process run smoothly:

- **Arrive early.** You'll want to observe and interact with the audience and resolve any technical setup challenges. Introduce yourself to your host and double-check for changes in the agenda. Lay out everything you need in the order in which you will use it. This includes a pen and tablet for any notes you need to make as you go.
- **Start on time.** If you are the guest speaker, of course, you must wait for the host to introduce you.
- **Set the ground rules for questions and public input.** Let the audience know whether you welcome questions and discussion during the presentation or would like them to wait until the end. Your instructions depend on the type of presentation, the audience, and level of challenge you expect from the audience.
- **Pay attention to audience reactions.** Be aware of indicators as you are delivering your presentation and alter your approach accordingly. For example, if you notice a loss of attention, you might shorten the discussion on the current point, change your position by walking into the audience, or ask a question of the audience. Make sure that your listeners understand what you are saying.
- **Avoid speaking too softly or too quickly.** Be sure that your voice has proper amplification. Do not assume that everyone can hear you while using your regular speaking voice.
- **End on time.** If you have been given an hour, go 45 minutes and allow 15 minutes for questions and discussion. If you expect a great deal of discussion, you may want to shorten your presentation to 30 minutes. Adapt according to your time assignment.

Your host or moderator may step in to end the discussion. If you are willing to stay afterward to answer any further questions, make that known to the audience.

Answering Questions

The question-and-answer period can be uncomfortable for some speakers. Using sparingly, humor can be a terrific tool to break any tension. Relax and remember that you are an expert.

- **Encourage your audience to ask questions.**
- **Repeat the question.** Before answering, paraphrase each question so that all members of the group can hear what was asked.
- **Don't answer a question if you are not sure of the answer.** Take the questioner's name and contact information and get back to him. It is far better to admit that you don't know rather than to answer incorrectly.
- **Handle hecklers carefully.** Forestry can be a volatile subject, and sometimes an audience member will bring up unrelated issues to provoke a confrontation. Keep your cool. Set a good example for professionalism. Acknowledge that you hear her and will duly record or pass on her comments. If someone is monopolizing the session, affirm the need to hear from everybody in the room who wishes to speak, and again, offer to take this person's contact information and pass it on to an expert in the issues he is concerned about. There are many ways to handle such situations other than losing control and creating a public scene; explore websites, books, and classes that specialize in conflict management and resolution.

Pitfalls

- **Avoid making the mistakes that prompt these common complaints about presentations***:*
  - The speaker did not match his content to the audience.
  - The presentation was poorly organized.
  - The speaker made poor use of her time.
  - The visuals were badly designed and not well used.
- **Respect your audience.** If you do not have much time to plan your talk, resist the temptation to share that fact with your audience. Never begin by saying, "I'm sorry these slides aren't that great; I just didn't have much time"—in effect telling your audience that you did not care enough to prepare for them.

- **You probably will not please everyone.** Some of your audience may have a preconceived notion of what you are going to say or what you represent, and all the facts in the world will fail to convince them otherwise. Your job as a speaker is to present the information and allow the audience to process it. Be persuasive, but be professional.

Coffee break conversations

Many meetings and conferences now have agendas that include "open space," time without a structured session. Use this time wisely. Encounters during these breaks are sometimes more important than what is gained during the prepared sessions. Rather than slipping away to make phone calls, use the time to solidify future relationships with attendees.

- **Make contacts.** Interact with the meeting participants.
- **Answer questions.** Many people are not comfortable asking questions in a large group but will seek you out during breaks.
- **Discuss issues.** This is a real opportunity to show in-depth knowledge and emphasize salient points.
- **Learn about community concerns.** Asking questions about local issues is a great ice breaker, and it identifies you as someone who can relate the community's challenges to your professional work.
- **Become a human face with family and interests.** This can add to your credibility and create a bond between you and the audience.

Followup

After a presentation, evaluate your performance and effectiveness so that you can continue to improve your communication skills. You also need to wrap up loose ends and follow through with commitments made during the session.

- **Evaluate.** Assess your presentation and the audience responses formally (through passing out a survey, see Appendix 6), or informally (through chatting with participants). Based on those observations and comments, make changes before presenting to a similar audience.

- **File business cards.** Note on each card when, where, and why you collected it. Does this person need to be contacted in the future? Is she a possible contact for you? Keep the cards in a separate business card file for presentation and program contacts.
- **Pass on contact information.** If you collected contact information from participants that you promised to pass along, do so as soon as possible.
- **Check your equipment and materials.** If repairs or replenishing is needed, complete the job before you begin planning your next presentation.
- **Contact the media.** Let the public know about your presentation. Prepare and send a press release to your local newspaper before your presentation. Consider sending a press relase after your presentation as well. This is a way to get your message out to others as well as reinforce your message with those that attended your talk.
- **Send information to SAF. The Forestry Source** features public involvement by forestry professionals. Information about the *Forestry Source* can be viewed at http://www.safnet.org/periodicals/forestrysource.cfm, or call the national office at (301) 897-8720.

CHAPTER 3: Large-Group Communication

Large groups offer the opportunity to reach many people in a short period of time with a forestry message; they also present special challenges. This chapter offers information on effective strategies to help you…

- develop effective workshops; and
- create presentations for seminars, conferences, and general assemblies.

Conducting Effective Workshops

A good workshop allows for an exchange of information that serves the needs of the participants. This means you must know who the audience is, what information they require, and how to deliver it to them. Workshops take a lot of time and thought. For each contact hour, you can anticipate 10 or even 30 hours of preparation time. The next section provides a few guidelines to help in the planning process.

Designing a Workshop

- **Define the audience.** Finding out about the audience for a closed workshop—one for organization members or invited participants only—is a critical step in designing a workshop. Research the background and purpose of the host organization. Review records and proceedings from its meetings. Identify the traits specific to the audience.
- **Identify your target market.** The target market for an open workshop—one with open registration—will be members of the public: who will benefit from the workshop and how can you reach them?
- **Advertise to your target group.** If you fail to get out the word out about an open workshop, it will be poorly attended.
  - **Send flyers.** Use established mailing lists. The SAF national office can help in this effort.
  - **Post information in stores and community bulletin boards** for a program that will appeal to the local community.
  - **Make phone calls to opinion leaders.** A personal invitation can be very enticing.

- **Offer Continuing Forestry Education credits to your attendees.** If appropriate, this can be added incentive for your colleagues to attend the workshop.
- **Consider using the media.** If you want to draw from a broad audience, send press releases to local newspapers and prepare community service announcements for radio stations.

- **Evaluate what information people need.** You need a reason for people to attend the workshop. Are you presenting new information? Will your workshop assist in professional specialization or skill development and practice?
- **Conduct research.** Talk with others in the organization, field, or community to find out what topics are needed and wanted. What are the issues people are dealing with? What skills are missing from your audience? Are there information gaps? Everyone can use new information, but if it does not meet people's immediate needs, they have little incentive to attend. Once you understand their needs and wants, you can develop an appropriate theme.
- **Establish your theme.** A guiding idea helps you clarify the purpose of the workshop and pinpoint the target audience. The theme will also help you determine the breadth of the content, the facilities needed, the speakers to be invited, and the format of the workshop.
- **Prepare for different learning styles.** Some people learn by reading, some by seeing, hearing, or doing. You will have all types in your audience, so include techniques that will benefit everyone. You can use videos, audio tapes, and hands-on activities to support your subject content.
- **Select a proper location.** Site location is crucial. It should be easily accessible and either close to your target market or at a site that is interesting enough to draw the target market. For instance, a local school is convenient for community members who want to learn about native species for landscaping; a famous arboretum entices landscape architects to travel overnight to attend a workshop there. Consider the cost of the space and how it will affect the price of your workshop. If cost is a hindrance, investigate such meeting areas as small hotels, local libraries, schools and colleges, fellowship halls, community centers, local and state parks, and scout camps.
- **Select your workshop amenities.** Consider what you want to provide for the attendees. Will you need a catering service? Will you need special technology? Such

details need to be arranged well in advance. The site manager may have special rules that need to be followed or require you to use the facility's equipment (for an additional cost). Ask for a copy of your facility's rules, and plan to bring anything is not listed as available for your use.

- **Invite the speakers.** The audience, purpose, and theme will determine the speakers who participate in the workshop. Decide whether you are willing to pay honorariums or whether speakers will need to be willing to speak without a fee.
    - **Consider using multiple speakers.** Having multiple speakers gives participants different perspectives and means less work for each speaker.
    - **Use a moderator.** A moderator will help keep your workshop moving and on schedule, especially if you have multiple speakers.
    - **Define speakers' roles early in the process.** Make sure speakers know what they need to cover. Have them describe the techniques they will use to convey information to the audience.
    - **Have a backup plan** in case a speaker pulls out at the last moment.
- **Locate sponsors.** To help offset costs to the organization and attendees, invite local businesses and related industry businesses to sponsor registration, a meal, or giveaways. Be able to answer the question, "How does sponsorship benefit this business?" Draft your thank-you letters so that they'll be ready to mail after the event.
- **Set the cost.** The registration fee depends on the costs and whether the workshop is a moneymaking venture.
    - **Free workshops:** In our profession, we frequently do workshops gratis, as a service. There is nothing wrong with this, but if the workshop is completely free, you may have people who sign up but do not attend. If there is a cost, people are more likely to show up because they have invested in their attendance.
    - **Breakeven or for-profit workshops:** Professional speakers often require fees plus travel expenses. Advertising, facility rental charges, coffee breaks and lunch, and materials and supplies are other costs. How many registrants will you need to pay what registration fee to cover all the expenses?
- **Fine-tune flyers and registration forms.** Advertisement and registration for the workshop can be in flyer or on-line format. Make sure all necessary information is included. Date, time, location, theme, agenda, speakers, expectations, available

housing, sponsor, cost, Continuing Education Units or graduate credit, open or closed registration, and contact information are essential. Make any attendance limits clear on the flyer. Contact the post office for bulk mail rates and regulations.

- **Advertise.** Begin your advertising at least six to nine weeks in advance of the workshop date. Consider sending a “Save the Date” message three months in advance.
- **Manage registration.** Registrations should be sent to one address. Keep a running list of registrants and receipts, and have a helper double-check that list. Excel and Access are excellent software programs for entering and maintaining information.
- **Mail workshop materials.** Any advance materials should be mailed at least three weeks ahead of the workshop. Any that should be completed and returned prior to the workshop should be sent out at least six weeks before the workshop date.
- **Agenda design.** Many workshops offer prepared curriculum content and agendas. However, you may want or need to adapt the agenda to the audience and purpose of your particular workshop. If you are not working with a canned workshop, you will need to design your schedule and content.

During the Workshop

- **Keep your audience comfortable.** Your audience will learn better if you provide the proper tools and the right amount of “down time.”
  - **Cover the basics.** Have appropriate snacks, meals, drinks, pens, paper, insect repellent, water, and restroom facilities.
  - **Schedule 15- to 30-minute breaks** no longer than two hours apart.
  - **Provide orientation.** Point out where the restrooms are, where and what snacks are available, when breaks are scheduled, and what time the workshop will conclude. When attendees know the plan, they will be ready to move into learning mode for you.
- **Time management.**
  - **Schedule a registration period** to give time for participants to get settled when they arrive.
  - **Start on time and stay on time.** Do not take advantage of your audience’s time.

- **Allot time between sessions and speakers.** It takes approximately five minutes to switch CDs or files if all the technology is working correctly. If some segments involve activities, make sure all of the materials are laid out prior to starting the workshop.
- **End on time.** Conclude on schedule so that participants can meet their other obligations.

- **Evaluations.** An evaluation component should be built into every workshop. Allow plenty of time at the close of the workshop for participants to complete the evaluations. To encourage turning in the forms, have giveaways or continuing education documentation and certificates ready to exchange for the evaluations.
- **Followup.**
    - Soon after the workshop, take time to review the evaluations. Make note of any changes needed before another workshop.
    - Contact any registrants who requested additional support.
    - Send thank-you letters to all who donated time, money, materials, or services to make the workshop a success.
    - Prepare a press release for the local newspaper and notify the SAF national office.

Making Presentations at Seminars, Conferences, and General Assemblies

Presentations before seminars, conferences, and general assemblies are usually based on research and require a significant amount of preparation.

- **Seminars** are usually intended to be a learning environment for colleagues or future professionals.
- **Conferences** have an audience similar to seminars, but there is a tendency for them to have a larger and broader draw. Conferences usually have a theme.
- **General assemblies** consist of elected lawmakers and staff who are likely not forestry professionals; rather, they are seeking expert input on the subject. You will convey information about forestry research, issues, or procedures.

Preparation

- **Determine audience and purpose.** Identifying the audience and the purpose of the meeting is just as important here as in any other communications situation. Research the background and mission of the organization, assembly, and people involved. Review the proceedings from previous meetings. Identify the traits specific to the audience of this particular presentation or hands-on program. The reason for your appearance has probably been set forth in the presentation proposal or invited speaker request; clarify this if necessary.
- **Conduct or complete research.** If you are an invited speaker, you may need to perform additional field and library research to prepare for the presentation. Be sure to document your resources so that you can cite, recommend, or relocate them.
- **Respect time limits.** Presentations in these circumstances observe strict time limits. Time slots can be as short as 15, minutes or as long as several hours, depending on the structure of the session; know how much time you will have. Question-and-answer segments are commonly included in the time allotment. Observe the limit and respect the time that is allotted to other presenters. If you go over, you are stealing someone else's time.
- **Determine format.** Choose the format that will best suit the combination of audience, purpose, time, theme, and site. Will you use PowerPoint, slides, lecture, or a hands-on approach? Do you have the equipment and materials to support your presentation? Will the location be appropriate?
- **Define level of technology.** Know what technology will be available. Your level of expertise, available equipment, and site will determine what kind of audiovisual equipment or other technology to use. Conference facilities may require reservations, and sometimes a fee, for use of their equipment. Pay attention to any paperwork received prior to the conference or seminar. Have a backup plan for presenting your material and be prepared to move to it quickly. Surprises happen: plan for them.
- **Create a materials checklist.** Consider all the items you will need for your talk, from computer and laser pointer to pencils, tablets, and handouts. This list will depend on what type of presentation you are giving. If you are doing an experiential program, the list can be more involved: not only will you need your instructions, you will need instructional handouts for the audience and any materials needed for the activity. Plastic household storage containers make good "trunks" for equipment and supporting materials.

- **Prepare handouts.** Prepare any handouts you will need to support your presentation or program and deliver the take-home message. Make sure they are appropriate for the audience profile. A handout reinforces your presentation, and participants like having a take-home "trophy." Handouts available from the SAF national office include position statements, pamphlets and videos on becoming a forester, and bumper stickers.
- **Practice with a stopwatch.** Run through your presentation or program before taking it on the road. This will help you identify any rough spots in the presentation and ensure you can complete it in the allotted time.

Delivery

- **Bring the basics.** Check the guidelines for presenters carefully. Bring any props, equipment, or handouts to supplement or support your presentation. Bring backups of CDs, drives, or disks. Do not forget a supply of business cards.
- **Check in.** When checking in at the conference, let the registrar know you are a presenter. Frequently, presenters receive a ribbon or pin to attach to their nametags. This is not just for recognition—it provides access to speakers' rooms, exhibit halls, and other areas that may have limited access.
- **Find your room.** Check your presentation room in advance and investigate equipment, size, and setup. Doing so can help you mentally prepare.
- **Arrive early.** Arrive at your assigned room at least 15 minutes before the session is to begin. You can set up, meet your session moderator, and check for any last-minute changes of order in the speakers. Most conferences have people to help with any technical problems facing presenters. Find out who will be available to manage challenges with equipment, lights, or setup.
- **Proceedings.** Conferences and seminars routinely publish presentation and poster proceedings of their meetings. The guidelines for inclusion differ, so read the instructions carefully. You may need to submit an abstract at the time of the proposal, the acceptance, or at some point after the conference itself. If you cannot locate specific details about the proceedings, contact the conference team for help. For those who need to keep track of publications for job purposes, proceedings count as a publication.

CHAPTER 4: Local News Media

Working with local media is the most cost-effective method that foresters can use to convey the forestry message to mass audiences. Not everyone is comfortable talking to a reporter, but you don't necessarily have to be media savvy to work effectively with your local news media—you just need to know some basics.

This chapter offers information on effective strategies to help you…

- understand your role with the media;
- understand different media formats; and
- hone your skills for a successful interview.

Your Role with the Media

The SAF national office works with national media—major newspapers and the television and radio networks. SAF members across the country are much better suited to working with media in their own communities because most local media are more interested in hearing from their listeners or readers. It's that simple.

Your goal as a forestry communicator is to make local journalists aware that you are a source of information when they prepare forestry-related articles or broadcast segments on radio or television. To accomplish that goal, you need to establish relationships with journalists so that they can trust you and other foresters to provide sound, scientific information. The following are some techniques to help you become the media's window to forestry.

Finding and Contacting the Media

Contact information for media in your area is available:

- **Your phonebook** is a starting place to find contact information for newspapers and radio and television stations.
- **Internet searches** will turn up media outlets.
- **The SAF national office** can provide a list of the media in your city or state.
- **Media directories** are maintained by SAF state or regional communications chairs.

Develop media lists and keep them up-to-date. Add new names as you meet new people. Read publications and add the names of new journalists you encounter. Learn about the media services in your area and find out which other areas they serve. Media markets are usually served by more than one television, radio, or wire service, or news "feed." Small local stations contract with a larger service, such as the Associated Press, to get stories for them in other cities. Remember that your story may have interest for another area where a similar issue is being addressed.

You'll want to maintain two lists:

- ***Mailing list.*** This list should contain the name of the publication, station, or network, its address, and the names of people that you know at each. Send releases to the assignment desk (where editors assign stories to reporters) but also to the reporters who cover forestry and with whom you have already developed—or want to develop—an ongoing relationship. This helps to build trust on both sides of the relationship. It is perfectly acceptable to send multiple releases to the same place.
- **Call list.** Your contact list will probably be considerably smaller than your mailing list, but it can include wire services, local newspapers, local television and radio stations, and network news as appropriate.

Developing Relationships With Journalists

There is no magic to developing relationships with reporters, but there are tried-and-true techniques. Here are some tips you can use to enhance your relationships with local media.

- **Know the media outlet.** Research media outlets before you contact their editors and reporters. You will look like an amateur if it becomes apparent to a reporter that you know nothing about the publication, radio, or television she works for.
- **Introduce yourself to journalists before you need them.** Once you've identified journalists with whom you want to establish a relationship, call and ask for time to chat. Tell them you want to learn more about the stories they cover and how they like to work. Do not pitch a story idea the first time you talk unless asked; instead, focus on how you can be helpful in the future.
- **Contact them the way they want to be contacted.** Each reporter has his own preferences for receiving information. Today, most prefer e-mail, but some want to talk by phone or receive faxes. Always ask how a reporter prefers to receive information and then deliver it the way he wants it, regardless of what you prefer.

- **Be of service.** Consider how you can be helpful to a reporter, rather than the other way around. If you see yourself as her ally, she will think the same of you.
- **Provide relevant information.** Most reporters cover specific beats and need ongoing information and data about their topics. When you see information in association newsletters or trade or professional journals that is relevant to a reporter's subject area, send it with a short note, such as "Thought this might be useful to you."
- **Be sensitive about deadlines.** Give reporters as much notice as possible about upcoming events. Don't abuse the relationship by calling at the last minute and pleading for coverage. Always respect reporters' time and deadlines.
    - **Daily morning newspapers** are busy late in the day, so contact them in the morning.
    - **Weekly newspapers** are busy as they approach their weekly deadline; find out when they put the issue to bed and avoid contacting them on that day.
    - **Television news stations** are busier as the day progresses as they prepare for evening news programs, so call the assignment editor early.
    - **Radio stations** have irregular schedules.
- **Return calls promptly.** Reporters are usually under deadline and need accurate information in a timely manner. If you become a quick, credible source of information for reporters, you will receive more calls in the future. If you are slow to return calls, they will find other sources for their stories. If you delay more than a few hours in getting back to a daily reporter, you'll probably miss his deadline and, in effect, lose your opportunity for press coverage. If you have a cellular phone, give the reporter your number, this way they can contact you more readily.
- **Be credible.** Always shoot straight with reporters and avoid small talk and gossip about others. It is a reporter's job to dig up information, and your job is to be a trusted source of information about forestry and the profession. Never mislead a reporter and compromise your credibility.
- **Explain the value of your story.** Communicate why your press release or announcement will make a good story. For example, if you're announcing your views about forestry legislation, explain how the legislation will have an impact on the future of the forest and nearby communities.

- **Be patient.** Take a long-term approach to generating media coverage. Expect to take many small steps before you see bursts of exciting news. Plan ahead, keep your information and announcements in front of reporters, and the stories will happen over time. Avoid acting like you need to have your story covered: reporters receive calls all day long from people aggressively pitching their stories. Being low key, knowledgeable, and available will reflect well on you, your employer, and the forestry profession.
- **Treat all reporters with the same respect**. A reporter who today works for the local paper may one day become the editor of a major publication. Treat all reporters like they are calling from the *New York Times.* Some of your best long-term allies may be reporters from smaller publications who work their way to the top.
- **Be proactive.** If you deal with a story or issues, your view will be estalbished, and others will have to react to your view, which is better than you reacting to another's point of view. Taking this approach gives you more credibility.

Interviews with Reporters

Once you have established a good relationship with a journalist, she will be calling to interview you for a story or obtain forestry information. Being a good spokesperson is a skill that can be learned easily.

How to Prepare

- **Study others who are good at the job.** See what kind of interviews make the air on the evening news. Observe the kind of quotes your newspaper uses. Look for the good lines that get air time and column space.
- **Research your issue** until you know it inside and out and can hold your own in a conversation or debate. Develop a maximum of three key messages, or talking points, that you want to focus on. Write them down so that you can stay focused on them.
- **Think through each question** that you are likely to be asked, and carefully consider your responses. Always be ready to revise and refine.

Being Interviewed

A few general tips apply to every interview, whether it is for print, radio, or TV:

- **Relax and take at least three deep breaths.** Breathe slowly prior to the interview. This reduces your heart rate and calms your nerves. You'll sound more confident.
- **Stay focused on your key messages.** This increases the chance your points will be recognized and used. Observe a 7-second rule: be able to express each message in 7 seconds or less.
- **Repetition equals retention.** Repeat your key message, even if you've already said it. If it's really a key message, it bears repeating.
- **Emphasize what's important.** Use phrases like, "The most important thing to remember is...," or "I've talked about a lot of things, but these two specific points are crucial...," or "Here's what I think your readers will most want to know..."
- **Speak for the record only.** If you don't want a statement quoted, don't say it. Information is officially off the record only if you make the request up front and the journalist specifically agrees to it. Beware that for some reporters, nothing may be off the record. When in doubt as to whether to say something, it is better to leave the comment unsaid.
- **Keep your energy level high.** Sound passionate about your subject. High energy is contagious. Your energy may lead the reporter to be more enthusiastic about your topic.
- **Use your sense of humor.** If it's appropriate, feel free to be funny. Most journalists have great senses of humor and will appreciate a good turn of phrase.
- **Look presentable**. If you'll be on air, reflect well on the forestry profession.
- **Be comfortable with silence.** Answer the question and wait for the next one. Reporters often use the "silence" tactic to get you to say more. The result is seldom beneficial to you or your cause.

Telephone Interviews

A majority of interviews are conducted by phone. Since many of us spend several hours a day on the phone, it's easy to let our guard down and be more casual than we might be if the interview were face-to-face. That's when mistakes can happen. To ensure your best performance when being interviewed by phone, consider these hints:

- **Isolate yourself prior to the call.** Ideally, spend at least 10 minutes alone before a scheduled phone interview. Breathe slowly. Some people hum for a couple of minutes to warm the vocal cords.
- **Remove distractions.** Shut down your computer and turn papers on your desk face down so that you won't be tempted to read while talking or listening.
- **Review key messages.** Take a moment to review your notes and think about the points you want to convey before the call begins. Keep a typed list of these messages in front of you during the interview.
- **Stand while you talk.** You'll sound more energetic, and you'll find it easier to regulate your breathing. Standing also prevents you from leaning back in a chair and getting too comfortable, thereby lowering your guard.
- **Smile.** When appropriate, smile just as you would if you were talking to the reporter face-to-face. It's really true that a smile can be heard. It will boost your confidence and make you sound more approachable.
- **Track your speed.** Ask whether you're speaking too fast. Keep answers short and to the point. Many print reporters still take notes by hand, and radio reporters may be recording the interview for sound bites. They'll appreciate the courtesy.

Other Ways to Work with the Media

Press Releases

Knowing how to write press releases is a good skill to have. Often a company or agency media professional handles that job, but you may be called to write one for your SAF unit or other volunteer organization. To learn the specifics of writing press releases, read the material in Appendix 6. Here are some general guidelines:

- **A press release** is a way to announce your event or views. Small papers that have few reporters may use news releases without rewriting them, but most reporters rewrite these handouts, and large newspapers rarely use press releases as received. Reporters will call you if they are interested in following up.
- **Follow up on your press release up with a phone call.** A good approach is to say, "I'm checking to see if you have any questions about the news release I sent you recently." Be concise and be prepared to tell the reporter why this story is important to his readers. Don't ramble on with details or use forestry jargon. Get to the point of what interests the newspaper or radio and television station, and don't be self-serving

in making your pitch. Building in a story, or "hook" describing why they should see this as important news is also a good strategy for getting your release into press.

- **Make sure the outlet has your release one week in advance.** Your story has to be timely. If it happened last year or even last month, it will no longer be of interest to the media. News must be new.
- **Use releases only when you have something worth talking about to a journalist.** A journalist who receives too many releases with too little news value soon learns to ignore everything that comes from the same source.

Letters to the Editor

Newspaper editors are generally interested in letters from the community. Many papers print 10 to 15 letters a day, more for a particular newsworthy issue or event. Your letter can make a difference, and it may be the best way to get your message into print.

- **Respond promptly.** If you are addressing a published article, editorial, or letter, e-mail your letter the same day if possible, but certainly within two to three days. If many are received on the subject, the first ones will usually be printed. Those received later need to be outstanding to get printed.
- **Be polite.** Discuss the policy or program and don't attack the personalities of those involved.
- **Mind your ps and qs.** Check your letter for spelling and grammar, and provide your name, address, and daytime phone number.
- **Be concise.** Review the newspaper's policy regarding the length of letters. Even if there's no limit, keep your letter to 150–200 words or less. The longer it is, the more likely it is to be cut down. You know what's most important, so better that you cut it than leave the editing to someone else.
- **Convey your most important point first.** Describe how the issue affects the forests and those who value them. If a policy or practice is not beneficial to forests, explain why.
- **Don't pester.** Most papers print a representative sample of the letters they receive and often do not print letters from the same source more than once every 30 days. Submit letters sparingly.
- **Check your employer's or organization's policy on letters.**

Editorials and Op-Eds

Editorial staffs generally begin planning their Sunday edition by midweek and discussing what positions to take on trends and events. Editors may decide to write about items not covered elsewhere in the paper. The daily editorials and Sunday op-eds provide an opportunity for you to ask the local paper to support a particular viewpoint. Here are some tips for editorials and op-eds:

- **Meet with the editorial board.** Talk with the editors about why they should support a particular view.
- **Be persistent.** You may not be able to get coverage of the first issue you suggest.
- **Submit a request.** To avoid waisting time, make an effective pitch on an op-ed. If the editor is interested, then write it.
- **Submit an op-ed.** Editors are most interested in local issues and state or local angles on larger issues. The editorial should be 600–800 words, and you can expect it to be edited. Op-eds from syndicated columnists take precedence, so your piece may be held for some time.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

All television and radio stations are required by law to provide free airtime for public service organizations. Depending upon the type of PSA you create, a radio or TV station may air it at no cost. This is a particularly effective technique in smaller towns, and it is easy to do.

The public service announcement serves many purposes: it can raise awareness, educate listeners, announce an event, or be part of an effort to generate funds or meet other needs. Here is how to proceed.

- **Contact the public service directors or station managers at your area's TV and radio stations:** they decide which public service announcements get on the air. Meet with them personally, if possible, to find out their preferred length and format for PSAs and what kind of lead time they have.
- **Determine whether the station can help you produce your spot.** Simply ask.
- **Write the script for your PSA,** using the following guidelines:
  - Use short, upbeat sentences in a conversational tone.
  - Tell how your information can help the listener or viewer.
  - Ask for action on their part.

- Give information on where to go or what to do.
  - Tell the listener or viewer to contact your organization for more information.
  - Include your telephone number and your organization's website address.
  - Consider using a credible, 3rd party endorsement to strengthen your pitch
- **Follow the station's regulations.** Stations may only take PSAs in a certain format, so be sure to find out what exactly they will accept. Stations usually run 10-, 30-, and 60-second announcements. Prepare yours in all three lengths to improve your chances to getting on air.
- **Be prepared to pay a fee for a PSA that endorses specific legislation or promotes merchandise.**
- **Produce an effective, high-quality PSA to ensure airtime.** See Appendix 7 for advice on how to produce a high-quality PSA.
- **Consider using the station's community billboard.** Stations often have community billboards to advertise events, volunteer needs, or material needs (although they may not be willing to make fund-raising pleas). Such announcements can be submitted in writing for announcers to read on the air. Read your announcement out loud to verify the length of each version (10, 30, and 60 seconds) before you submit it.

CHAPTER 5: Elected Officials

Contacting and speaking with your elected officials is important and often vital in affecting public policy in regards to natural resources. Elected officials, whether local, state, or national, are accessible to you as a citizen. This chapter contains some basic information that will help you gain confidence in your meetings with elected officials.

This chapter offers information on effective strategies to help you…

- Schedule a meeting with your elected official; and
- Create a successful event involving your elected officials

Scheduling a Meeting with Your Elected Official

A meeting with your elected official is the most effective way of establishing yourself as an information resource for that person and is an effective way to communicate your concerns regarding current forestry issues. Meetings can be done in the official's district with your Senators or Representative when he/she is on recess or with a district staff member. However, if you are in Washington D.C. and would like to set up a meeting on Capitol Hill that would also be beneficial.

Tips for setting up an appointment:

- **Call the official's scheduler or appointment secretary.**
- **FAX your request before you mail it.** In most cases the scheduler will ask for your request in writing (See sample appointment letter in Appendix 9). A FAX is important because of the very long time delay with mail to Washington D.C. due primarily to precautions against terrorism.
- **Identify yourself as a forester/SAF member and voting citizen from the official's area** of service and request an appointment to meet with the official for 15 to 20 minutes about current forestry issues.
- **Request a meeting with a staff member who is familiar with the issue** if you are unable to set up a meeting with your elected official. This is especially important when dealing with State and national Congressional members. The staff are important; they track issues for Members of Congress and advise them on the pros and cons of issues for their district.

SUGGESTIONS FOR A PERSONAL VISIT:

- **Plan carefully.** Be clear about what it is you want to achieve.
- **Make an appointment**: when attempting to meet with a member, contact the Appointment Secretary/Scheduler. Explain your purpose and who you represent. It is easier for congressional staff to arrange a meeting if they know what you wish to discuss and your relationship to the area or interests represented by the member.
- **Be prompt and patient.** Legislators are very busy, so respect the time they have given you and do not be surprised if you have to wait for some time to get in to see them.
- **Be prepared.** Whenever possible, bring to the meeting information and materials supporting your position. Make sure these materials are succinct.
- **Be political.** Whenever possible, demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the member's constituency. Members of Congress want to represent the best interests of their district or state.
- **Be responsive.** Be prepared to answer questions or provide additional information. Follow up the meeting with a thank-you letter that outlines the different points covered during the meeting and send along any additional information and materials requested.

Holding Successful Legislative Events

Have you ever shaken your head in frustration when you came across an inaccurate myth relating to forestry perpetuated in the popular media or elsewhere? Have you ever wished you could just sit down next to key decision makers and share your science based perspective and observations gleaned from years of experience in the forest. Here is your chance. Across the country, SAF state societies and chapters have been conducting successful legislative breakfasts and luncheons. SAF members participating in such events, including Green Mountain Division Policy Chair Bill Samal, report "it [was] the single most effective and rewarding local SAF event I have been involved with." At a recent Idaho luncheon members had the ear of the Lt. Governor, as well as key state legislators.

Below are some tried-and-true tips for hosting an effective legislative event from SAF Policy Chairs Bill Samal (SAF Green Mountain Division) and Bob Maynard (Intermountain SAF).

- **Choose a date when the legislature is in session and legislators will be in the Capital.** Send out invitations at least one month in advance and reminders 10 days before. Request RSVPs and provide phone, email and snail mail address for responses. As the event approaches concentrate efforts on securing RSVPs from legislators serving on key forestry related committees (Federal examples are: Natural Resources, Agriculture and Fish and Wildlife.) For the 2006 State Legislator Session Calendar visit http://www.ncsl.org/programs/legman/about/sess2006.htm)

- **Choose a time that meets your needs.** Different legislators prefer different times of the day. It is wise to check legislative schedules and decide on a time that is between sessions.

- **Stay on time.** Legislators are busy people. They will appreciate you much more if you respect their time.

- **Choose a location convenient for the legislators**. Using an easy-to-find building, adjacent to the Capitol and legislators' offices and within quick walking distance, will help boost attendance.

- **Arrive early.** It is a good idea to arrive 15 minutes before the legislators are scheduled to arrive.

- **Make sure the invitees know that the meal is free**. Extending an invitation to a complimentary breakfast or luncheon demonstrates your goodwill and desire to share not just food, but information in a pleasant atmosphere.

- **Be gracious hosts and effective communicators**. Greet the legislators as they enter and immediately introduce them to a forester they can engage in conversation.

- **Consider having people register as they arrive**. This will help keep track of who was there.

- **Prepare an information sheet**. This should succinctly cover the issue you want to discuss and give them a reference point to refer back to in the future.

- **Discuss your message and role as provider of scientific-based information.**

- **Keep it simple.** Do not overwhelm the invitees with too much information. Make sure that all handouts are to the point.

Advocacy and Lobbying

Is it appropriate for SAF members to become politically active in local, state, or national forestry politics? Is it even legal? How far can an SAF chapter go in supporting a political position on a forestry topic? Can the SAF endorse a political candidate? These are the types of questions that at one time or another face SAF members nationwide. As such, it is important for members, chapters, divisions, and state societies to understand when advocacy becomes lobbying, and what pitfalls might exist.

Advocacy

SAF members may frequently find themselves advocating on behalf of professional forestry, even if they do not recognize it as such. Whenever SAF members adopt a position statement, testify before a legislature on a general forestry issue or topic, comment on proposed regulations, are interviewed by the media, or write an opinion–editorial, they are acting as advocates. There is nothing inherently wrong or unethical with such activity. SAF is founded on a set of principles that encourage its members to "advocate" for forest management and, in the many cases where SAF members become involved with forestry issues in a political setting, advocacy is an accepted form of expressing support or objection to a particular policy. Thus, members should feel free to engage the media, government, and the public in important forestry issues. It is only when advocacy becomes lobbying that greater caution is warranted.

Lobbying

The primary control over lobbying activity is exerted by the Internal Revenue Service. Nonprofit groups such as the SAF have strict limitations on the types of lobbying activities in which they may engage. Failure to comply with the IRS law and rules may lead to the revocation of a group's nonprofit status. For that reason, groups treat their lobbying activities quite seriously.

There are two fundamental types of lobbying: direct and grassroots. The first involves an organization contacting legislators or calling upon the group's members to contact legislators to support or oppose a particular program or piece of legislation. The second involves approaching the public to influence the outcome of legislation. What both share is that they attempt to influence a decision-maker or politician to vote in a particular way and both involve mention of specific legislation rather than general topics.

For the purposes of the IRS, as long as nonprofit groups refrain from spending money on direct or grassroots lobbying efforts, the activity is not considered "lobbying." In other words, if an SAF member volunteers her time to meet with a legislator to garner support for a new forestry bill and spends SAF funds to do so, that activity is considered lobbying. If she does not spend her SAF chapter's funds, then it is not lobbying.

In addition to the limitations pertaining to the way nonprofit groups may use their funds, another area of concern is the endorsement of a political candidate. Nonprofit groups are forbidden to either endorse or oppose the election of political candidates. For example, SAF chapters, divisions and state societies should take special care when inviting political candidates to speak at meetings during an election year. At such times, it is prudent to extend an invitation to the candidate's competitor as well. The SAF should take care to avoid even the appearance of favoring a particular candidate. This does not mean, of course, that the SAF cannot support or oppose the policies that a particular candidate might embrace.

The information presented here is not intended as legal advice to SAF members and groups. Rather, it is to provide suggestions and cautions when SAF members become involved in the one of the many political facets of forestry. To that end, SAF's Committee on Forest Policy recommends the following for SAF members engaged in political activity.

Identify your affiliation. The media, politicians, and the public should know on whose behalf comments or remarks are made. Opinions voiced as an individual are obviously less likely to be perceived as lobbying than those on behalf of the Society. Members should always be cognizant that speaking as an SAF member and speaking on behalf of the SAF are not the same thing.

Comments and position statements should coincide. When comments are made to the media or in a political forum, it is appropriate that those comments coincide with the applicable position statements at the national and state level. In that same vein, it is appropriate to have your state executive board approve such things as letters to a legislature prior to submission, if in fact the letter speaks on behalf of the SAF.

Scrutinize the use of funds. If at any point an SAF chapter, division, state society, or member expends SAF funds to participate in a political process, the use of those funds should be a red flag to carefully consider the nature of the activity.

Know the law. SAF members should familiarize themselves with any state-specific laws and regulations that may also regulate lobbying activities should the SAF become involved in state-level politics.

Find answers to your questions. Members should feel free to consult various resources if they have questions about advocacy or lobbying. Your state and regional policy chairs, the Committee on Forest Policy, and national office staff can be helpful in sorting out whether an activity runs any risk of being labeled as lobbying.

For more information about SAF's Committee on Forest Policy, visit the SAF website at www.safnet.org/policyandpress/policy.cfm.

APPENDIX 1: POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

PowerPoint or other slide show programs can be powerful tools for conveying information to an audience. However, if they are not used well, they can compromise your effectiveness. Here are some tips for preparing slide show presentations.

- **Use graphics and animation in ways that will enhance your message.** The focus should be on your words; the slides are a backdrop.
- **Keep slides simple:** don't fill them with text. Avoid complex graphs. If it takes more than 60 seconds to explain what the graph is trying to show, it is too complex.
- **Choose a font that is large enough** to be legible from all locations in the audience. If text, labels, and graphics are not clearly visible, don't use that slide. Don't resort to saying, " I know you can't see this very well, but…"
- **Avoid using red and green** for contrast: these hues are difficult for colorblind members of the audience to distinguish.
- **Create your last slide first.** It should describe the benefits of your subject or project.
- **Each slide should have a theme** that you are trying to convey.
- **Give each slide a thought-provoking title.** The information you present should support that statement.
- **Do not read word for word from the slide.** For each slide, use a three-step process:
    - Paraphrase the text.
    - Explain the graphic.
    - Say what the audience needs to know and what you want them to understand.
- **Spend no more than 60 seconds per slide,** to keep the audience's mind from wandering. It is better to have more slides and keep the talk moving than hanging on one slide for too long.

APPENDIX 2: POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Generally, a poster on current research, field trials, educational programs, outreach projects, or practical applications consists of an introduction, objectives, methods, results, and conclusions; it often includes photographs, artwork, captions, maps, graphs, and samples. It will be viewed from a distance by people who may be unable to take time to read the text in its entirety, and so a poster should be designed accordingly.

- **Learn the basics.** Poster presentations must fit the size of the available exhibit boards. Check the guidelines for poster presenters to learn the acceptable size and other requirements.
- **Use PowerPoint.** Most posters today are created by using PowerPoint. Open a new file and adjust the page size to the size limitations of the display boards and the printer you have available. The exhibit will consist of several panels rather than a single poster.
- **Focus your poster.** Decide on three or four concepts you want to display. Use the layout of the visual components of your poster to help you convey your story. Make sure that the key concepts are clearly and simply communicated to readers. Interesting details of the work can be conveyed in the one-on-one discussion time.
- **Make it legible.** Most people will spend around one minute viewing your poster from a distance of 6 to 10 feet. Avoid hand-lettered materials. Keep the poster simple and the text legible. Use a large font (24 point or higher), appealing colors and graphics, and as few words as possible. Choose the information you wish to convey carefully: you have limited time and space to get your message across. Select clear photographs and use simple, clean graphs.
- **Be concise.** Captions for photos and graphs should be short, under 25 words each. Keep blocks of text under 50 words.
- **Identify yourself.** List title, author, and sponsoring organization at the top of the poster. Title and subtitle should be brief.
- **Consult with graphics experts.** Designers in your organization may have further suggestions and may even help make your poster if you can give them enough time.
- **Prepare handouts.** Prepare supplemental information and include your name, affiliation, and contact information. Tables for supplemental materials are not likely to be

available; bring a partition hanger to hook over the top of the board, or a legal-size envelope that you can attach with a stapler or stick pins.

- **Make a supply kit.** Include a glue stick, stick pins, Velcro tabs, tape, scissors, and sharpies so that you are prepared for any kind of display board surface—the information regarding what would be available may have been incorrect.
- **Know your obligations.** A presentation should be posted by the time designated in the conference instructions. The instructions should tell you where the display boards are located, which board is assigned to you, and the setup and take-down times.
- **Be present.** Conferences provide one or more opportunities for attendees to review the posters and speak with poster presenters. At those times, you should stand next to your display to discuss your work and answer any questions. Have handouts and business cards available for distribution.
- **Submit your work for proceedings.** Conferences and seminars routinely publish presentation and poster proceedings of their meetings. The guidelines for inclusion differ from conference to conference. Read the proceedings instructions carefully. You may need to submit an abstract at the time of the proposal, the acceptance, or at some point after the conference itself. If you cannot locate specific details about the proceedings, contact the conference team for help. Proceedings count as a publication for those who need to keep track for job purposes.

APPENDIX 3: CONFERENCE PRESENTATION SELECTION

Conference presentations are usually determined through a process beginning months before the actual conference. A call for proposals (CFP) is issued outlining a theme and describing the sessions and workshops, and naming the deadline for proposal submission. The deadline is usually nonnegotiable.

Conference themes may be broad and somewhat ambiguous. Call the conference coordinator or contact for conference proposals to explain your proposal and ensure that it is a good fit with the overall theme. The personal contact helps establish you as an individual rather than just a name attached to an abstract.

To prepare a submission, follow the instructions carefully. Most CFPs now allow you to submit either on-line or by mail. Supply a title for your presentation, a short description to be printed in the program, and a short abstract. Pay careful attention to the theme and include in your submission language clearly showing the connection between your paper and the conference theme.

Once the submissions have been received, the conference team sorts the entries and sends them out to established professionals, who review them for quality, appropriateness, and value to the profession. Each entry is scored accordingly. When the scoring is completed, the conference team selects the presentations for particular sessions and time slots. Those presenters accepted for the conference are then notified.

Any paperwork accompanying acceptance needs to be completed immediately. Some conferences have deadlines for confirming acceptance and will select other presenters to fill unconfirmed slots.

Most conferences require registration for the conference if you are a presenter. A one-day registration may be available if you are planning to attend only on the day of the presentation. Sometimes you can negotiate with the conference team if you are coming in strictly to do your presentation and you do not plan to participate in any of the other sessions, but this arrangement is usually reserved for presenters whose extenuating circumstances prevent them from attending the full program.

Some conferences offer scholarships, or travel grants, to help defray a portion of your expenses as a presenter.

APPENDIX 4: CHECKLIST FOR SMALL/LARGE GROUP PREPARATION

COPIER FRIENDLY PAGE!

- ❑ **Establish Initial Contact.**
- ❑ **Contact the Media.** As soon as you know the concrete details of your public presentation, contact the appropriate media for the area. The earlier you appear on their schedule, the better the chance of coverage. If you are unsure of how to proceed, contact your SAF Communications Chair, any SAF Communications Committee member, or the SAF National Office.
- ❑ **Define Audience and Purpose.** Identify the traits specific to the audience of this particular presentation. Then determine the purpose of the contact.
- ❑ **Determine Topic.** If you are without an agreed upon topic and are having difficulty limiting your choices, try brainstorming. Make a list of potential topics you feel comfortable addressing. From that list, narrow the topics down to 2-3 that would be most appropriate for your audience and purpose. Make one brief outline per topic of major points you would use as guiding principles for a presentation or program. Choose your topic from your outline choices. Save the other outlines for future use.
- ❑ **Conduct Research.** As you go through your topic points, determine if you need to do any additional research. If you do not know your topic inside and out, or suspect there may be new developments, this is the perfect opportunity to update your knowledge base. Document your sources so that you can cite, recommend, or relocate them easily.
- ❑ **Determine Format.** Choose the format that will best suit the combination of audience, purpose, time slot, and place. Do you have the equipment and materials to support your presentation? Will the location be appropriate for your presentation style or activities? Be prepared to adapt and always have a backup plan.
- ❑ **Define Level of Technology.** It is important to know what your technology challenges will be. Your level of expertise, available equipment, and location will determine how intricate your technology use will be. Always have a backup delivery plan. Be prepared to move to it after a short period of time. Surprises happen. Plan for them.
- ❑ **Create Materials Checklist.** Consider all the items you will need for your talk, from computer and laser pointers to pencils, tablets, and handouts. This list will depend on what type of presentation you are giving. Rubbermaid-type containers are terrific storage boxes for creating "trunks" of equipment, particular presentations with support materials, or specific programs for an identified audience.
- ❑ **Identify Handouts.** Prepare any handouts you will need to support your presentation or program and deliver the take-home message. Make sure they are appropriate for the audience profile. A handout reinforces your presentation and participants like having a take-home trophy. You can contact the SAF National Office about handouts available through them, such as issue statements, pamphlets and videos on becoming a forester.
- ❑ **Practice Ahead of Time.** Practice your presentation or program before taking it on the road. This will help you identify any rough spots in the presentation and assure you can complete the presentation in the allotted timeframe.

APPENDIX 5: SAMPLE PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

SAMPLE #1

[Your Program Name Here]

Evaluation

How effective was the [Your Program Name Here]? (mark an X under the number that best describes your opinion)

1 Poor	2	3	4	5 Average	6	7	8	9	10 Very Good

2. What did you like most and why?

3. What is one technique or piece of information that will be useful/applicable to you?

4. Do you have any other advice, suggestions, or feedback on this topic?

5. Please give any suggestions of other topics that would interest you in future presentations.

SAMPLE #2

[Your Program Name Here]

Evaluation

Training Objectives:

I. Objective #1
II. Objective #2

1. Given the above objectives, how effective was the training overall?

1 = Not at all effective   10 = Very effective.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

2. Which objective(s) were most effectively addressed and why?

3. Which objective(s) were less effectively addressed and why?

4. Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements: (1 = Strongly agree, 5 = Strongly disagree)

a.	I will probably utilize what I learned in this training	1 2 3 4 5
b.	I would like additional training on this subject	1 2 3 4 5
c.	What I have learned during this training is important/applicable to my job	1 2 3 4 5
d.	This training was an effective investment of time	1 2 3 4 5

5. If additional trainings were provided on [your topic here], what suggestions would you have for making them most relevant and useful to you? (Topics, objectives, speakers, other resources, etc)

6. What other comments, advice, or ideas about land use planning or the Private Forestlands Planning effort would you like to share with us?

APPENDIX 6: TIPS FOR WRITING NEWS RELEASES

Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources Press Secretary

News Release Style Sheet

The purpose of a news release is to provide the news media with information about a program, activity, event or accomplishment. In some cases it is used to provide a statement to avoid direct interaction with the media. It is often a "pitch" or a public relations tool used to get media interested in covering what is happening within your agency or organization. Most news releases are straightforward facts – short, simple, timely and to the point. Some releases could be feature releases to be used at any time. They are generally longer and have no time element for their use.

When writing a news release, remember you are providing factual information, rather than expressing an opinion. Often editorial comments can be eliminated by a style change while still expressing a similar message, such as removing extraneous adjectives and adverbs or including the information as a quotation.

The news media may use your release as fodder for a story. Often a reporter will follow up with you for more information to round out the story or look for other sources. Always be prepared to suggest others who may be able to comment on the issue. Some smaller news outlets may print your news release just as you present it to them. Therefore, it is important to use the right style and format to increase the chances of the information being used.

Checklist for getting the news picked up

Emphasize the most important and interesting details in the first two paragraphs. The reason for writing your release should be in the first paragraph. Try to answer the "five w's" in your first paragraph – who, what, when, where, why.

- Dispense information in a descending order of priority-- the most important to the least.
- Write in an active voice, using strong, descriptive verbs rather than passive verbs. "XYZ secured grant," not "A grant was secured by XYZ."
- "I" or "we" have no real place in a document that effectively represents the entire department. Refer to the organization in the third person.
- More is not necessarily better; keep messages short and concise.
- If a sentence contains many colons, commas or conjunctions, it's probably best to try and break it up into smaller, tighter sentences. If you are confused by your own sentence, you can be sure others will be too.
- Establish a format and stick by it. If you are called upon to write a news release on a similar sort of activity regularly, don't try to reinvent the wheel each time. Create a model that works, then modify it for each occasion.
- As a general rule, "show" rather then "tell." The press won't unconditionally believe an opinion; the facts must be there to back it up.

- Check your facts to make sure they are accurate. Especially check dates, times, dollar figures, spellings of names, phone numbers and web addresses.
- Always have someone review your release. You will often overlook your own mistakes.

Punctuation

Ampersands -- Do not use in place of "and." Usually used as part of a name, such as "Brown & Sigel, Inc."

Colons -- Use as an introduction to a list of three or more objects.

Commas – When listing fewer than four objects, each object or phrase can be broken by commas, but if there are more than three phrases or objects, semi-colons should be used instead.

Exclamation Point -- Use sparingly in body text. Permitted in quotes to express subject's enthusiasm, but best if used rarely.

Hyphens -- Joiners used to avoid confusion of meaning, e.g. "She is hard-minded."

Parentheses -- Be sparing with parentheses, because they usually indicate some sort of editorial comment, or that a sentence is becoming too complex for other more standard punctuation.

Quotation Marks -- Use whenever using the words of another, either written or spoken. All sources must be credited with provided information. Commas and periods are always contained within quotation marks. Quotes, dashes and exclamation marks go inside when applying to the quote, outside when applying to the entire sentence.

Semi-Colons -- Used to show a greater separation of thought than a comma but less than a period, as well as in lists (previously noted under "commas").

Style

Most newspapers use Associated Press (AP) style, so it makes sense to follow AP style when crafting your news release. Following a certain style provides consistency and professionalism in the information provided. It also lends credibility to the information, and makes it more likely a reporter or editor will use your news.

- When composing dates, the month should always be abbreviated, unless it is standing alone or is the subject itself. Examples: "The event will be held Jan. 15." "They are predicting the results to be released sometime in April." "February is a brutally cold month."
- Numbers zero through nine should be spelled out; 10 and above should be written numerically. Numbers in the millions, billions and trillions should be abbreviated to no more than two decimal places. For example, 23,546,000 should be written 23.5 million. Lengthy dollar figures such as $1,234,321 should be written $1.2 million.
- Titles of individuals before the name are capitalized, lowercased after the name. DCNR Secretary Michael DiBerardinis and Michael DiBerardinis, DCNR secretary.
- Lowercase seasons of the year.

- Avoid overcapitalization. Capitalize proper nouns that identify a specific place, person or thing. Susquehanna River should become the “river” not “River.” The Bureau of State Parks should become the “bureau” or “state parks.” Proper names of the park or forest should be capitalized.
- Dates should be used without the "th." The event will be held June 16 (not 16th).

Format

- “For Immediate Release” should appear at the top of the page.
- Always include a contact name and number. Provide a cell phone number if the contact will be out of the office. Be sure the contact person is available.
- Write compelling headlines that draw in the editor. Make the headline bold type.
- Include a dateline – the city in which you are releasing the information. If you are at a remote location to make an announcement, include the on-site town or city.
- Double space with one inch margins on each side.
- Don’t type your text body in all caps. Make it a readable font.
- Include # # # or -30- at the end of the release to signal there are no more pages.

APPENDIX 7: CREATING EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources Press Secretary

Public Service Announcements

The purpose of a public service announcement (PSA) for a non-profit organization is to persuade the audience to take some specific action or adopt a favorable view towards some service, institution, issue or cause.

By definition, it's an advertisement or commercial at no cost as a "public service" to a media outlet's readers, viewers or listeners. Public service announcements can be a tool in generating awareness for critical issues while dispensing important information for many non-profit organizations, but creating and distributing them is a major challenge.

There used to be federal requirements that media outlets devote a certain amount of time or space to PSAs, but this is no longer the case. For that reason, it can be very difficult now to have PSAs used because:

- Many TV and radio stations have become increasingly involved with local issues and select charities; and
- In a competitive business, many stations are using time that used to be allocated to PSAs for station and program promotions, to help them achieve a stronger identity in market.

If you do decide to pursue a PSA, to garner exposure you need to spend some time thinking about your audience, have a message that connects and a creative effort that separates your message from the pack. It's also a good idea to have a way to judge the impact of your efforts.

Audience

The first thing to think about when you are considering producing a PSA is the intended audience for your message. Are you trying to reach the general public, or a specific, targeted group (such as private forest landowners, people who hike, tourists, etc.)?

If you have a targeted audience, it is worth the time talking about the most effective tools to reach them, which more than likely is something other than a PSA (examples could be a targeted mailing, through a network or association, etc.)

If your audience is the general public, or a large segment of it, then a PSA could be helpful in getting the word out.

Message

Through an advertisement or PSA, you're trying to grab the viewer's attention, keep them from turning the channel, trying to dispense information and often, over the long run, trying to affect deeply seated attitudes and behavior.

You need to give them information that is useful to them. If you want them to go to your web site "to find out more" it better be about something they can connect with instantly. Think like your audience, or ask people who represent your audience what would matter to them. Develop your message from those thoughts.

Creativity

Most folks already know what's bad for them, who's in trouble, how to stay safe, and so on. In order to take your message into their realm of awareness, you need to help them see your issue in a light they haven't seen before. Gather your folks with the most knowledge and who are most creative, and have them "think outside the box."

Measurement

You want to have a way to measure the impact of your PSA. Try to build in a way to determine if a media outlet has used it. This is no easy task, but some ideas would include a post card to be mailed back or dropping you an email.

You also want to measure the response to the campaign's call-to-action (what you are asking the recipient to do). Tracking pre and post website "hits," tabulating requests for publications, or counting the number of toll-free phone calls generated are just some of the ways responses can be measured.

Approval Process

Make sure the people who have the authority to say "yes" are included every step of the way. Advertising does not get better as the committee to approve it gets bigger, but it can be helpful to adopt a team approach by bringing all the people who will be involved in the campaign to the table in the planning stage. Reactions to creative products are very subjective. It's helpful to ask, "Is it just that you don't like it, or don't you think it will work to reach our audience?"

A final note: Many people, when considering the best way to reach out to people with important information about an issue, automatically want to do a TV PSA. It's true that advertising, and TV advertising in particular, can be the most effective way to reach a large audience. A very important concept in advertising, though, is repetition of the message (people need to hear things lots of times before they start to stick). Effective TV campaigns cost a lot of money. Even if you are going the PSA route, it can be costly to produce something to send to stations.

If you have limited or no resources, you need to either find someone who is willing to donate the production of a TV PSA; consider radio instead which is much less expensive to produce; or be creative about outreach tools other than TV which could be just as effective in reaching your identified audience.

APPENDIX 8: SAMPLE LETTER TO REQUEST A CONGRESSIONAL MEETING

[Date]

The Honorable **[Full Name of Senator or Representative]**
Address

Sent Via Fax: ***[FAX NUMBER]***

Dear Senator or Representative [**Last Name]** :

I am a member of the Society of American Foresters and would like to talk to you about several forestry issues that have arisen of late, including **[fill in issues, could include federal funding cuts for forestry, wildfires, or whatever forestry issue you wish to discuss].**

The Society of American Foresters (SAF) is the national scientific and educational organization of the forestry profession in the United States. As a member of SAF, I've pledged to use my knowledge, skills, and conservation ethic to ensure the continued health and use of forest ecosystems and the present and future availability of forest resources to benefit society. I would like to share my thoughts with you on how we can work together to address the current issues facing our nation's forests and better manage our forest resources.

I would like to meet with you and your appropriate staff members on ***[date and general time]*** *for approximately 20 minutes to provide you with information on* ***[this/ these issue(s)]*** *and request your support as I and other members of SAF works to address* ***[this/them]****.*

Thank you for considering this request. To schedule an appointment, please contact me at **[phone number & e-mail].**

Sincerely,

[Name]
[Title]
[Organization]

APPENDIX 9: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Websites:

Letter writing help: NorCal SAF's website: http://www.norcalsaf.org/ then click on the "Letter Writing Center" tab

Communicating with Legislative Officials:

Congressional Information:

- Find Your Congressional Members: http://www.visi.com/juan/congress/
- Bill Information, Text, and Status: http://thomas.loc.gov
- Public Laws, Court Cases, and Regulations: www.findlaw.com
- Representatives, House Committees, Schedules, etc: www.house.gov
- Senators, Senate Committees, Schedules, etc: www.senate.gov
- Regulations: http://www.regulations.gov

Executive Branch Information:

- Federal Register - Rules, proposed rules, and notices of Federal agencies and organizations, executive orders, other presidential documents: http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html
- USDA Forest Service – information on the Agency and its activities: http://www.fs.fed.us

Other Legislative Helps:

- A Complete Guide to Position Development: http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/policyprocess.cfm#SAFandForestPolicy
- The SAF's Forest Policy Principles: http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/policyprocess.cfm#forestpolicyprinciples
- SAF's Position Statements: http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/positionstatements.cfm
- SAF Reports: http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/selectedreports.cfm
- SAF National Office Staff Contact Info: http://www.safnet.org/contact.cfm
- Issues up for Consideration by the SAF Forest Policy Committee: http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/forestpolicy.cfm
- Briefings on Forest Issues: http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/forestrybriefing.pdf

Public Speaking:

Toastmasters.org

Media Relations:

"Working with the Media: a Guide for Volunteer Organizations and Tree, Environmental Advisory, Planning, and other Municipal Commissions" available in pdf format at http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/FreePubs/pdfs/uh168.pdf

Google Search Ideas:

Public Speaking
Letter Writing
Journalism
[Your State] Media Guide

Books:

Fazio, James and Douglas L. Gilbert. *Public Relations and Communication for Natural Resource Managers.* 3rd ed. Woodland Press, 2000.

Hall, Mark W. *Broadcast Journalism: An Introduction to News Writing.* 3rd ed. New York: Hastings House, 1986.

Defrancesco, John. *The Commonsense Guide to Publicity: Commonsense Advice on How to Use the Power of Publicity.* DeFrancesco Goodfriend Public Relations, 1996.

Henry, Renee A. Jr. *Marketing Public Relations: The Hows that Make it Work..* Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1995.